

Chapter- II

Urban Governance and Institutional Arrangements in Guwahati

2.1. Introduction

Effective urban governance depends largely on the existence of appropriate institutional arrangements (Singh: 1999). The urban local government should be legally empowered and administered by democratically elected representatives accountable to the citizens entrusted with clear competences supported by devolved fiscal and financial powers. This chapter attempts to analyse the institutional arrangements for urban local governance as existed in Assam with special reference to Guwahati City from the existing constitutional, legal and administrative framework.

2.2. Constitutional and Legal Provision towards Urban Governance in India

The concept of urban governance through modern elected municipal government in India is based on the Constitution. The enactment of 74th Constitutional Amendment Act 1992 (CAA) ushered in a new era of local self-government in India. The Act provides for institutional, legal, and administrative framework for municipalities. It Act visualizes municipalities to function as institutions of self- government. It was a culmination of long aspirations to restore local self-government in urban areas. Prior to the enactment of the 74th CAA, no specific mention of municipalities was made in the Constitution (Datta: 2006). Local government was wholly assigned to state governments. Municipalities were frequently suspended and superseded by state governments in the absence of any constitutional protection and no elections were held for years in many states. Over time, y the very basis of local self-government eroded and the municipalities became weak, unable to perform their basic duties. The statement of objects and reasons appended to CAA 1992 states “ *in many states local bodies have become weak and ineffective on account of a variety of reasons, including the failure to hold regular elections, prolonged supersession and inadequate devolution of powers and functions. As a result, urban local bodies are not able to perform effectively as vibrant democratic units of self-*

government.”²⁸ The functional domain of urban local government was further reduced by *parastatal* agencies established by states for water supply and sewerage services, etc. The local governments were marked by weak executive system and poor fiscal health. Their financial bases were eroded due to abolition of many buoyant sources of revenue like octroi tax, entertainment tax, professional tax, etc., by state governments. This forced them to depend on financial transfers from state governments. The adhoc manner by which finances were transferred from state to the local governments was not sufficient to build an adequate resource base for local governments (Mehta: 1999).

Under these circumstances, the 74th CAA was adopted with the primary objective of empowering the municipal governments as institutions of self-government for delivery of public services. The 74th CAA inserted Part IXA in the Indian Constitution which contained Articles 243P to 243ZE. It may be pointed out that this Amendment contained certain novel provisions, for example, direct election by the people in the same manner as at the Union and State levels; reservation of seats for women; an Election Commission to conduct election, a Finance Commission to ensure financial viability of these institutions (Basu: 2013). Another striking feature is that the provisions inserted in the Constitution by Arts. 243-243ZG are in the nature of basic provisions which are to be supplemented by laws made by the respective State Legislatures, which will define the details as to the powers and functions of the various organs, just. It is to be recalled that ‘local Government’ including self-Government institutions in both urban and rural areas is an exclusive State subject under Entry 5 of List II of the 7th Schedule, so that the Union cannot enact any law to create rights and liabilities relating to these subjects. What the Union has, therefore, done, is to outline the scheme which would be implemented by several states by making laws, or amending existing laws to bring them in conformity with provisions of the 74th CAA. After implementing legislation was enacted by the states, elections have taken place in most of the states and the municipalities have started functioning under the new laws. This amendment does not apply to the states Jammu and Kashmir, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and the National Capital Territory of Delhi

²⁸ The Constitution (Seventy-Four Amendment) Act, 1992 (India)

(Basu: 2013). Thus, the concept of urban governance in India is inextricably linked to CAA 1992. This study of urban governance is also based in this context.

2.3. Institutional Arrangement for Urban Governance in India

The 74th Constitutional Amendment Act (CAA) 1992 prescribes various institutions for the formation and operation of urban local governments in the states. The institutional arrangements for local governance are: (i) State Election Commission (Article 243 ZA)- to supervise, direct and control the preparation of electoral rolls and conduct all elections to the local bodies; (ii) Municipalities(Article 243Q)- Municipal Corporations (for larger urban areas), Municipalities (smaller urban areas), and Nagar Panchayats (areas in transition from rural to urban) are to function as ‘institutions of self-government’, and prepare plans for socio-economic development; (iii) State Finance Commission (Article 243Y)- to review the financial position of urban local bodies and make recommendations regarding the principles of devolution of resources from states to local bodies and to suggest measures needed to improve their finances; (iv) Wards Committees and other Committees (Article 243S)- to take municipal government closer to the people to carry out the responsibilities conferred upon them and take power to the people; and (v) Metropolitan Planning Committees and District Planning Committees (Article 243 ZD)- for the preparation and consolidation of development plans. Resulting from the 74th CAA, the number of Urban Local Bodies in all the states has reached 3885 by 2014 in which there are 174 Municipal Corporations,1558 Municipalities and 2153 Nagar Panchayats is shown in table 2.1

Table 2.1.: Urban Local Bodies in India, 2014

Sl. No	States	Municipal Corporations	Municipal Councils	Nagar Panchayats	Total
1	Andhra Pradesh	19	112	38	169
2	Arunachal Pradesh	2	–	–	2
3	Assam	1	–	71	72
4	Bihar	11	42	87	140
5	Chhattisgarh	10	32	127	169
6	Goa	1	13	–	14
7	Gujarat	8	159	–	167
8	Haryana	9	14	51	74
9	Himachal Pradesh	1	20	28	49
10	Jammu And Kashmir	2	6	77	85
11	Jharkhand	3	14	19	36
12	Karnataka	8	138	68	214
13	Kerala	5	60	–	65
14	Madhya Pradesh	14	100	263	377
15	Maharashtra	26	220	13	259
16	Manipur	–	9	18	27
17	Meghalaya	–	–	–	–
18	Nagaland	–	3	–	3
19	Mizoram	–	1	–	1
20	Odisha	3	37	66	106
21	Punjab	10	95	47	152
22	Rajasthan	5	13	166	184
23	Sikkim	1	1	5	7
24	Tamil Nadu	10	125	529	664
25	Tripura	–	1	19	20
26	Uttarakhand	6	28	38	72
27	Uttar Pradesh	13	194	423	630
28	West Bengal	6	121	–	127
	Total	174	1558	2153	3885

Source: Election Commission of India, Electoral Statistics Pocket Book, 2014

The 74th CAA aims to bring local democracy through municipal governments. The mandate is for democratization and decentralization of political authority to municipalities to make them more representative, self-regulating and service oriented in urban governance. However, the primary task of empowerment and operation of local government by devolution of decision making process is kept under the purview of state governments. Thus, state governments are responsible for creating the legal framework to establish the institutions through municipal laws and to empower them to function effectively. However, state governments are found to be reluctant to decentralize decision-making power to urban local governments. The transition to local democratic governance in India is not smooth but marked by conflicting of interests at the local level. The concept of local self-government through modern municipal government is yet to take its roots in Indian polity (Rao: 2006).

2.4. Critique of Local Self- Governance

In India, the CAA does not define the concept of ‘local self-government’ and the principles for governing local self-government are not enshrined in the constitution or in local legislation. The level of municipality in Indian federal structure as ‘third tier’ of government is also not specified in the constitution. The CAA prescribes broad responsibilities in the 12th Schedule and the financing mechanism for local governments, but the assignment of functions, and devolution of fiscal and financial power depends on the states and local municipal laws (Chopra: 2004). Many states do not even have municipal laws nor conduct elections for different reasons in North-East India. Though Guwahati City has municipal legislation, but democratically elected urban local government had not been constituted from 2008 to 2012 mainly due to problem in holding election. Thus, constitutional guarantee for the basic right of local communities to local self-government is missing. This indicates that the concept of local self-government in urban area under the 74th CAA is not born out of the principle of subsidiarity. Since municipality is a state subject under the Indian Constitution, the state governments decide the nature of local government, the degree of decentralization, the

extent of resource transfers and functional autonomy and the level of democratic governance at the local level (Sellate: 2006).

The 74th CAA, 1992 visualizes the municipalities to be representative institutions, more service and developmental oriented, and no longer to be viewed as civic bodies responsible for the provision of only a few merits or public goods. The municipalities are to discharge important tasks of planning for economic and social development in urban areas, a major departure from their traditional roles. However, the role of local governments in planning for development of urban areas would be meaningful only when central planning commission of India views the urban local government as the third tier of governance that has its own constitutional identity. So far, planning commission has concentrated on aspects related to the central and state in developmental planning. Local governments are deemed to be sub-ordinate part of the state governments and have no development plan of their own under the centralized planning system of planning commission. There is, thus no direct linkage between urban local governments and central planning commission for transfer of plan funds (Chaubey: 2005). This is in contrast to the constitutional status of local government and the principles of decentralization in which the urban local governments are devoid of their due share in the developmental process. A new approach is urgently needed to give the importance local governments deserve for developing the country's economy. Studies have now established with reasonable amount of certainty that increased decentralization follows a higher level of development. This implies that countries like India, which are on the cusp of breaking from being developing, low income countries into middle-income countries, should pay greater attention to decentralization (Kumar:2005). To be true institutions of self-government, municipalities should be enabled to formulate their own development plans under the centralized planning to channelize inter-governmental transfers to empower cities with sufficient resources and political autonomy to fulfill their large responsibilities.

The 74th Amendment Act provides for participation approach with directly elected representatives to perform planning, management and delivery of civic services,

involving citizens in local affairs through democratic governance. However, the Act does not define the powers of the elected representatives. In most cases, elected representatives could not perform functions meaningfully in the municipal affairs due to lack of clearly defined powers, roles and responsibilities (Chaubey: 2005). The municipal government has now a specific term of five years and if the state dissolves a municipality, election are to be held within six months. Evidences have shown, however, that the state election commission under the CAA cannot ensure regular conduct of election for local governments. Though most of the state governments have held elections for ULBs, their regularity remains a problem due to many reasons. The Guwahati Municipal Corporation election has not been conducted for five years from 2008 to 2012. Non- constitution of elected urban local governments due to non-conduct of election is a serious constitutional or legal crisis. No effective mechanism exists at present for the central government to prevail upon the state to comply with mandatory requirements under the CAA.

The CAA (Article 243X) aims to minimize the arbitrariness and ad hoc decision making in the state-municipal fiscal relation. Accordingly, the state governments are required to constitute State Finance Commission (SFC) with the mandate to deal with broad areas of municipal finances such as (Datta: 2005): (i) distribution between the state and the municipalities of the net proceeds of the taxes, duties, tolls and levies by the state, which may be divided between them and allocation between the municipalities; (ii) determination of the taxes, duties, tolls and fees which may be assigned to or appropriated by the municipalities; and (iii) the grants-in- aid to the municipalities from the consolidated fund of the state. Evidences have shown that the institutions of State Finance Commissions (SFC) have not contributed much to augmenting the finances of municipal governments (Sellate: 2006). Due to ineffective functioning of SFCs, deficient fiscal power and weak financial resources of ULBs, Central Finance Commission (CFC) has now been mandated to recommend transfers to augment the consolidated fund of a state to supplement the resources of the municipalities, thereby, establishing a linkage between the finances of local bodies, state governments and central government.

Recognizing the weak constitutional foundation of urban local government within Indian federalism, the central government has also made a suggestion for transfer of 'Local Government' entry from the 'State List' to the 'Concurrent List' which will enable the central government to legislate on local bodies and thereby clean up the optional provision under the 74th CAA. Others have even suggested for the creation of 'Local List' in the constitution to allow for district functional and tax domain for local government. The relevant suggestions made by the Venkatachaliah Commission in 2002 (a national commission constituted to review the working of the Constitution) for the constitutional change concerning the urban local bodies are given below (Datta: 2005):

- (a) The municipalities "should be categorically declared to be 'institutions of self-government' and exclusive functions assigned to them."
- (b) The Twelfth Schedule to the constitution, with powers of local taxation, are to be made compulsory.
- (c) The concept of a distinct and separate domain for municipalities should be recognized.

2.5. Urban Governance in India: Functions and Responsibilities

The CAA (Article 243W) provides that the state laws should endow municipalities "*with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as institutions of self-government.*" The states are to make provisions for the devolution of powers and responsibilities upon municipalities with respect to the preparation of plans for economic development and social justice and the performance of functions and the implementation of schemes as may be entrusted to them including those listed in the Twelve Schedule. The Twelfth Schedule contains an illustrative list of eighteen functions that may be entrusted to the municipalities. These functions are as follows:

- (1) urban planning including town planning;
- (2) regulation of land-use and construction of buildings;
- (3) planning for economic and social development;

- (4) roads and bridges;
- (5) water supply for domestic, industrial and commercial purposes;
- (6) public health, sanitation, conservancy and solid waste management;
- (7) fire services;
- (8) urban forestry, protection of the environment and promotion of ecological aspects;
- (9) safeguarding the interests of weaker sections of society, including the handicapped and mentally retarded;
- (10) slum improvement and upgradation;
- (11) urban poverty alleviation;
- (12) provision of urban amenities and facilities such as parks, gardens, playgrounds;
- (13) promotion of cultural, educational and aesthetic aspects;
- (14) burials and burial grounds, cremations, cremation grounds and electric crematoriums;
- (15) cattle pounds, prevention of cruelty to animals;
- (16) vital statistics including registration of births and deaths;
- (17) public amenities including street lighting, parking lots, bus stops and public conveniences; and
- (18) regulation of slaughter houses and tanneries.

The assignment of functions to local governments is left to the state governments. Since assignments of functions are not mandatory in nature, it is not incumbent on the states to entrust the functions and responsibilities to the local bodies including those listed in the Twelve Schedule. In Assam, Guwahati Municipal Corporation has to discharge 24

mandatory and 47 discretionary functions, of which five functions are as per the Twelfth Schedule.

It is also observed that the functions prescribed for municipalities under the CAA are wide ranging and duplicate many functions presently performed by state functionaries. Many municipal governments do not have the capacity and the resources to discharge these functions and, thus, they are either performed by state agencies or left undelivered in the process (Datta: 2005). In Guwahati city, Guwahati Municipal Corporation, Assam Urban Water Supply & Sewerage Board and Public Health Engineering Department has a shared responsibility in the distribution of water supply in the City. Thus, responsibilities are highly fragmented among development agencies, state departments and municipal governments, delivering inefficient services without economies of scale. To improve the situation, the only logical solution is to empower the municipal government to become a key actor in urban governance, having the mandate to provide services based on preference and choice of citizens, while parastatals and other bodies are deprived of such mandates.

In assignment of functions, many states have come up with their own definition of 'obligatory' and 'discretionary' municipal functions and those functions 'as may be assigned' by the state government (Chopra:2004). Recognizing the complexities, government committees and commissions have tried to simplify and identify the core functions for urban local governments. The Eleventh Finance Commission's (June, 2000) lists core functions for municipalities such as: (i) primary education; (ii) primary health care; (iii) safe drinking water; (iv) street lighting; (v) sanitation, including drainage and scavenging; (vi) maintenance of cremation and burial ground; (vii) public conveniences; and (viii) other common property resources. So there should be clear separation of functions between the state government and local government to avoid overlaps and ensure role clarity.

2.6. Urban Sector Reforms in India

Recognizing weaknesses and deficiencies in the local governments, the government of India pursues reform measures through the state governments to promote good urban governance and making urban local bodies as self-sustaining viable entities of local self-government. Of these measures, mention may be made of a reform linked assistance to the state governments through the Urban Reforms Incentive Fund (URIF) which is for revising municipal accounting to actual based double entry accounting system, levying of reasonable user charges, rationalization of property tax, introduction of e-governance, etc (Rao: 2005). A number of North-Eastern states, Manipur, Meghalaya, Nagaland and Tripura are signatories to these reform measures. Besides, a Model Municipal Law (MML) has been formulated for adoption by state governments to simplify municipal bylaws, enhance borrowing, and to allow private sector. MML aims to implement in totality the provision of the 74th CAA for empowerment of ULBs by providing legislative framework for urban sector reforms. The relevant reform areas are: (i) a unified law for three levels of ULBs; (ii) The executive power of a ULB to be exercised by the Empowered Standing Committee; (iii) indirect election of Mayor or Chairperson with five years term;

(iv) constitution of wards and ward committees; (v) classification of municipal functions into core municipal function (water supply, drainage and sewerage, solid waste management, roads, etc.), functions assigned by government, and other functions; (vi) state government can dissolve an elected local body if it shows default in performance or abuse of powers, after giving due notice and review by a committee and election should take place within six months; (vii) implement recommendations of State Finance Commission by state governments; (viii) state governments to frame a Comprehensive Debt Limitation Policy, laying down the general principles of borrowings of loans by ULBs; and (ix) encourage private sector and non-government organizations (NGOs) to participate in construction, financing and delivery of services including billing and collection (Urban Finance, 2003).

Further, the Government of India has signalled the importance of the urban sector for the Indian economy by launching a major initiative in the form of the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JnNURM) in December 2005. The mission aims at improving and augmenting the economic and social infrastructure of cities as well as affordable housing and basic services to the urban poor. In trying to make Indian cities economically productive, efficient, and inclusive, it promotes reforms at state and city levels by making the funding for JnNURM projects conditional on reforms. A major achievement of the JnNURM has been to highlight the urban agenda of reforms and create dynamism in a sector which has long suffered from neglect. Jawaharlal Nehru Urban Renewal Mission is launched to create incentives and support for urban reforms both at the state and city levels to develop appropriate enabling framework through memorandum of agreement with state governments. Grant assistance will be available for specific activities of medium-term city development plan, project proposals and urban sector reforms such as implementation of decentralization measures as per CAA 1992, legal and accounting reforms, e-governance, community participation, public disclosure of local spending decision, etc.

Many studies (Dhaliwal: 2004; Jain: 2005; Rao: 2004) conclude that unless these reform measures have legal and regulatory mechanism, they will remain ineffective. The approach under these initiatives is persuasion through incentives and gradual transition, which lacks radical measures needed to constitutionally empower local government based on democratic and participatory governance should be adopted if good urban governance is to be achieved(Dhaliwal: 2004). Procedural and process reforms to streamline municipal administration should be pursued with municipalities directly through legal and regulatory instruments with a set timeframe for each activity to become a reality in the near future (Dhaliwal: 2004).

2.7. Institutional Arrangements for Urban Governance in India

Under the decentralization dimensions illustrated by Johnson and Minis (1996), the level of decentralization to urban local government in Assam and India is still at the bottom end. The urban local governance system in India is still evolving. Local governments in

many states remain weak, as the state governments are reluctant to decentralize powers. Empowerment of local government depends on decentralization. Urban management can improve when local government takes full charge of urban affairs (Singh: 2006). Major functions are still performed by government departments and their agencies. The enactment of municipal laws has not ensured the transfer of functions to municipalities in Assam (Sellate: 2006). The assignment and their satisfactory discharge of functions depends on the rules and regulations as specified by the state governments. Although, many functions have been assigned to municipal governments, the exercise of these functions is uncertain and variable at the discretion of state governments. Many municipalities could not discharge their functions satisfactorily since the state governments have not transferred the requisite manpower and finances (Rao: 2006).

Local municipal governments need decision-making power and the resources to deliver responsibilities. Decentralization of decision-making and devolution of fiscal and financial powers is the basic principle on which local self-government is based, which is also a tenet of good governance. Decentralization, in this context, means local governments empowered with sufficient resources and autonomy to carry out their responsibilities. Some municipal governments in India perform well given the resources at their disposal and the power to act independently. Examples are Alandur municipality and Surat municipality where significant public services were undertaken by decentralizing decision-making power down to the lower functionaries with private sector participation (MoUD: 2011).

We may now analyze the legal-institutional aspects of urban governance in India in more detail to understand the inherent weaknesses of the system. Datta (2006) mentions two options of constitutional status for local government. The first is *coordinate status* implying a formal division of state powers covering local governments. Secondly, *independent status* where local governments would have a right of existence rather than continuing to be creatures of the states, and provide for central legislative and fiscal intervention for their effective functioning. India opted for an independent status through the 74th CAA with hierarchical relationship among the various units of government, and

without a clear mandate for central intervention, except for expanding the mandate of the Central Finance Commission to recommend central assistance to states for municipalities.

Let us first examine the organization of urban local government. The municipalities have two broad functionaries: the elected and the appointed. The elected persons constitute the legislative wing, while the appointed constitute the executive. The authorities consist of (a) standing committee, (b) commissioner, and (c) ward committees (Singh: 1999). The standing committee comprises of elected representatives or the councilors having the powers of sanctioning of the budget, approving the commissioner's action on performance of various municipal functions- demarcation of streets, re-aligning of building, giving approval to contracts exceeding certain sum, granting sanction for disposal of property, writing off any sum due on account of any tax, etc, (Rao: 2004).

In all established democracies, local government has a political executive and the local government itself decides its form. This is in contrast to the system in India where the executive functionary of municipal government is appointed by the state. The municipalities are driven by a bureaucratic system rather than elected councils of representatives. In India, majority of the mayors are indirectly elected by the councilors. The terms of mayors vary from state to state. In Assam, the term of mayor is one year. These terms are not specified in the local laws and are kept under the state discretion (Singh: 1999). Thus, there is no uniformity in the model of municipal government, the mode of election and term of office for mayors. The central government has moved for indirect election of the mayor with five year terms and the executive powers of the ULBs to be exercised by empowered standing committee. From the above analysis, it is recommended that the local governments should have the right to appoint its own political executive who is accountable to the citizens and not to state governments. There should be a uniform model of municipal government and a fixed tenure for mayors to have stable local governments. The power of local government should vest in the executive council headed by the mayor.

Further, the municipal governments in Assam and other states are subordinated to the state governments in their functional decision-making. The state exerts bureaucratic

influence over municipal administration, expenditure and execution of services. At the state level, the urban development department controls the local government with its own urban policy and programme. The state decides the executive of municipality, appointed usually from state bureaucracy. Local functions are concurrent, minor functions being delegated by the states. The state controls the appointment and management of executive officers (Dhaliwal: 2000). Several states in India have introduced state cadres of municipal service, like Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh, Odisha but these have reduced municipal control over staff assigned by the state governments. In Assam, a large number of personnel are drawn from the state government. The state appointments and controls the conditions of service of executive officers who are transferable. No municipal governments have their own cadre service. There is a gross lack of human capacity in municipalities to discharge their duties. This is in contrast to the principle, which stipulates that local authorities shall be able to determine their own internal administrative structure in order to adapt them to local needs and ensure effective management and the conditions of services should permit recruitment of high quality staff based on merit and competence (Rao: 2006). From the above analysis, it is observed that in terms of political autonomy and accountability, decentralization of local government in Assam and other states is extremely low. In the decentralization dimension (Johnson and Minis, 1996), local governments in India stand at the lowest scale as selection of their service conditions are largely set by state governments, and the municipalities are accountable to the state government and not to electorates. According to this illustration, real decentralization of powers is achieved when local government is accountable to the local constituents and selects their own officials under their control.

2.8. Institutional Arrangement for Service Delivery with reference to Water supply and Sanitation in India

The state of urban service delivery in India's cities and towns is far poorer than is desirable for the countries's current income levels (MoUD Report:2011). Considering that the Indian economy has been one of the fastest growing economies in the world for some time, and aspirations and standard are raising, the current state of service delivery is

simply unacceptable. With rapid increase in urban population and continuing expansion of city limits, the challenge of delivering water in Indian cities is growing rapidly. Inadequate coverage, intermittent supplies, low pressure and poor quality are some of the most prominent features of water supply in the cities of India. But some excellent exceptions to this general state of affairs have emerged in recent years (MoUD Report: 2011). There are some examples of significant achievements in generating a turnaround in the delivery of water supply and sanitation services in some Indian cities. The Government of Karnataka, with assistance from the World Bank, launched the Karnataka Urban Water Sector Improvement Project (KUWASIP) in 2005 in five selected zones in three cities (Belgaum, Gulbarga, and twin cities of Hubli-Dharwad) to build and deliver an efficient and commercially viable 24x7 urban water supply system through Public-Private Partnership (PPP). The project essentially involves a performance-based contract with a private company for upgrading the network and operation and maintenance (O&M) of the system. It uses 10 to 15 per cent less bulk water and has attained efficiency through improvements in system design, revamping the distribution network and installing leakage detection systems. Average monthly water bills range from Rs 80 to 150 depending on consumption, and are significantly lower than what residents used to pay earlier (KUWASIP: 2010). Collection efficiencies have gone up as the ULBs are collecting higher revenues from more satisfied customers. Customer service centres operate 24x7 to address customer complaints and queries. With the economic viability of the project confirmed, the ULBs of Hubli-Dharwad, Belgaum, and Gulbarga are now considering full city roll-outs.(KUWASIP: 2010). In August, 2009 the project was conferred the first prize in the PPP category of the National Urban Water Awards of the Ministry of Urban Development, Government of India.²⁹ More recently, Nagpur has implemented a number of projects within an overall framework of integrated water management to achieve 24x7 water supply. The pilot project is in the demonstration zone of Dharampeth covering 10 per cent of the city's population. A private company was responsible for upgrading the network, installing meters, and putting in place a monitoring system and a customer service centre. The project initially ran into problems

²⁹ Government of India, *Report on Urban Infrastructure and Services (MoUD)*, March, 2011

with the steep increase in water tariff, but a compromise solution was found. To scale up the project to cover the entire city of Nagpur, a contract has been awarded to the same private company. For the full city project, the private company is also contributing finances for capital investment. In the cities of Karnataka and Nagpur, the significantly better supply situation is accompanied by considerable improvement in the revenue generated from water supply. Both are cases of partnership rather than privatization. Both involved a number of governance reforms and tariff increase, and the private sector brought in efficiency gains (MoUD Report: 20011).

The challenge of sanitation in Indian cities is acute. The problem of sanitation is much worse in urban areas than in the rural ones due to increasing congestion and density in cities. In a City Sanitation Study (2010a) conducted by the Ministry of Urban Development, none of the 423 cities was found to be 'healthy' and 'clean'. The Municipal Corporations of Chandigarh, Mysore, and Surat and the New Delhi Municipal Council were the only four ULBs that fared relatively well. Close to 190 cities in the study were rated to be in a state of emergency with respect to public health and the environment (MoUD, Government of India, 2010a). However as with water supply, a silver lining has also emerged in recent years with a few successful cases of better service provision in sewerage. Navi Mumbai's city-wide sanitation initiative has led to the construction of a sewerage network covering the core urban areas and building of three sewerage treatment plants between 2006 and 2008. The O&M of the plants has been outsourced to private companies through a performance-linked contract (MoUD Report: 2011). Like-wise, Alandur's sewerage project is the case of a small city implementing an underground sewerage system, led by public participation. Alandur, a residential suburb of Chennai in Kanchipuram district with a population of 150,000 had no underground sewerage until the year 2000. Almost 80 per cent of the households had to depend on septic tanks with soak pits. The urban landscape of Alandur has been transformed by an infrastructure project which has provided a comprehensive underground sewerage network and a sewage treatment plant. This has been accomplished over a period of five years with direct public participation. The major contributing factors to the success of the initiative were the dynamic leadership of a directly elected mayor of Alandur, the

supportive role played by the municipal corporation, and the creation of an enabling environment by the Government of Tamil Nadu (Mathur: 2002; Krishnagopal: 2003).

2.9. Institutional Arrangement for Service Delivery with reference to Water Supply in Guwahati City

The development of public water supply system in an area bears a long history. It is also often the result of requirement and reflection of a social aspiration of communities in the concerned areas. Although, there were not any well-planned public supply systems in Guwahati in the past, a few big tanks: *Digholi pukhuri* (tank), *Zor (pair) pukhuri* in Ujanbazar and *Nak-kota pukhuri* in Panbazar along with *Kamala Kuwari pukhuri* in Chandmari reflected the aspiration of Ahom rulers for ensuring the availability of drinking water for the then resident community of the area. There was also prevalence of small water tanks and wells excavated in various localities to collect water. Besides these wells and tanks, the river Brahmaputra and the river Bharalu (a small river passing through the city) also served as sources of water for the people of the city. After the declaration of Municipal Body in 1873, the first water treatment plant was constructed in 1887 at Panbazar. Later, the Municipal Body was renamed as Guwahati Municipal Corporation (GMC). The first modern water treatment plant under the GMC was established in 1960 at the initial Panbazar site which is still functioning. Later on, two public water supply systems were established at Satpukhuri, Ujan Bazar (1984) and Kamakhya (1992). In the beginning, there was only one public water supply system to meet the needs of drinking water in the city. Although, the development of a water plant initially fulfilled the demand of the residents, other operating systems like community water tanks or reservoirs were also placed according to the population density at core localities of the city. Some people have their own dug wells. From the water plants, drinking water was supplied to households through pipelines and mobile tankers.

2.10. Ward Committees and Service Delivery in Guwahati City

The CCA provisions for elected representatives and ward committees visualize the local government to be fully participatory, responsive, transparent and accountable institutions.

Ward committees are the only formal institutional arrangement for people's participation under it. The purpose of these committees is to enable interaction between the people and their elected representatives, to secure proximity of municipal government to the people in decision making process, planning, management and delivery of responsibilities, and finally to ensure accountability to their electoral constituents (Singh: 1999). The ward committees represent at a smaller scale the powers of the standing committee in regards to execution of works in the wards. They are normally constituted by inclusion of all the councilors elected from the wards as well as nominees of either the mayors or the commissioners. The wards are represented in the council through their chairpersons. The ward committees are empowered to sanction estimates and plans for municipal works in their areas. They make recommendations on proposals regarding estimates of revenue and expenditure and render advice on matters to the municipality. It is observed that in Guwahati city there are 31 ward committees, but they have not been delegated with adequate powers and responsibilities to discharge their functions effectively (Field Survey: 2014). The wards are inadequate support system from the corporation. Memberships of these ward committees are based on selection and nomination rather than election and are largely dominated by elected councilors. The distressing feature of ward committees is that they are packed with members of the ruling party, thus politicizing the grassroots institution, which is meant to promote peoples' participation in city governance (Ravindra: 2005). However, where these committees are effective, the citizens are involved in the participation of municipal affairs in a non-partisan manner (Smitha: 2011). Though involvement of community-based organizations (CBOs), NGOs and private sectors in some municipal affairs and service provision such as solid waste management, sewerage and sanitation, etc., is showing an increasing trend in the Guwahati city, citizen participation in decision-making in the ward system is highly limited (Field Survey: 2014). Horizontal accountability mechanisms have not been in placed in municipal management in terms of budget formulation, expenditure and borrowing decisions and performance reporting. Thus, effective involvement of the citizen in plan preparation and implementation is missing. There are examples of community involvement in municipal budget formulation in a few cities like Bangalore

and Hyderabad, but these examples are more of an exception than a general rule in India (Datta: 2006). Further, there is general resistance to pass on relevant information to the citizens by the municipal bureaucracy and sharing of information outside the municipal organizational hierarchy is perceived as a threat. There is no formal linkage in the wards and councils for regular citizen participation and involvement of civil society organizations in the municipal affairs as in other countries of the world. Formal institutional mechanism for people's participation such as referendums, public hearings, citizens' assemblies, and people initiatives are lacking in Assam and other states in India (Rao: 2006).

The Constitution and local municipal laws do not provide forms of service delivery. Under the 74th CAA, local governments are supposed to perform many responsibilities. This opens up opportunities for private sector participation in provision of infrastructure and services. The recent initiatives taken by the central government endorse participation of private sector and NGOs in construction, financing and delivery of services. However, the mechanism and the criteria for engaging private sector are left to the state and local governments (Singh: 2002). There is no uniform policy in municipal governments for deciding what services to be produced and provided directly by public institutions, services to be contracted out or to be delivered in partnership with private sector or the third sector. In Assam, as most major civic services are provided by government departments, the involvement of private sector is extremely limited. However recently, the Guwahati Municipal Corporation has involved 31 NGOs in door-to door collection of garbage.

2.11. Present Status of Water Supply in Guwahati City

A adequate public water supply and its coverage of the urban population is one of the vital components of urban affairs management policy. The system of public water supply at present in Guwahati is administered through three major organizations- the Guwahati Municipal Corporation, the Assam Urban Water Supply and Sewerage Board and the Public Health Engineering Department. There is an area- wise division of jurisdiction of

these organizations.(Sharma: 2014). The present institutional arrangement for water supply and sanitation in Guwahati city is shown in the table 2.2.

Table 2.2: Institutional Framework for Water supply and Sanitation in Guwahati City

Planning and Design	Infrastructure	Construction	Operation& Maintenance
PHE/AUWSSB/GMC	Water supply	PHE/AUWSSD/GMC	PHE/AUWSSD/GMC
PHE/AUWSSB/GMC/ FCD	Sewerage	PHE/AUWSSB/GMC/ FCD	PHE/AUWSSB/GMC/ FCD
PHE/AUWSSB/GMC/ FCD	Drainage	PHE/AUWSSB/GMC/ FCD	PHE/AUWSSB/GMC/ FCD
GMC	Solid Waste disposal	GMC	GMC

Source: City Development Plant Guwahati, July, 2006

Notes: PHE-Public Health Engineering; AUWSSB- Assam Urban Water Supply and Sewerage Board; GMC-Guwahati Municipal Corporation; FCD- Flood Control Department

The Guwahati Municipal Corporation (GMC) was constituted in 1974 under the provisions of the Guwahati Municipal Corporation Act, 1971. The Corporation covers an area of 216 sq k.m. (Sharma: 2014). The Corporation has a council of 31 elected ward councilors. The council is headed by a Mayor and the Commissioner is the executive head of the corporation. The GMC water supply scheme caters to most of the areas within the corporation. The daily requirement of water in the city is 150 million litres per day (MLD). Against this demand the supply of GMC water amounts to only 55 MLD. In the GMC area four water treatment cum distribution plants, seven deep tube- wells and 530 tube- wells are working. The Kamakhya water works cater to the needs of Kamakhya, parts of Pandu and Santipur area of west Guwahati city. The plant at Satpukhuri has a capacity of providing 22.70 million per day. The Hengerabari water Treatment Plant is serving a small area. The rest is generated through deep tube- wells. The system of water supply by the GMC is subsidized through government grants from time to time to meet the capital as well as current expenditure. The GMC has proposed various schemes of

water supply since its inception, but lack of finance is the major factor for abandoning most such projects. There is no government sanction against the estimates made by the GMC. Similarly there is no consistency of project and plans of the corporation determined from time to time.

The Public Health Engineering Department (PHED) is the nodal department of the state government for water supply and sanitation programmes in the rural areas of Assam and was set up in 1956. It is another agency of water supply in the city with production capacity of 35 million litres of water per day. PHED serves primarily governments buildings and installations in the city. At present the four major campuses of the city meet their daily requirement of water from this department. These are the Dispur Capital Complex, Gauhati University Campus at Jalukbari, Assam Agricultural University Campus at Khanapara and the Guwahati Medical College at Narakasur hills. The PHE, from its plant located at Panbazar, supplies purified water but it covers only a small portion of the city's population. The PHE sells water on a commercial basis also to the housing colonies of the Reserve Bank of India and the State Bank of India. There is provision of selling water to private parties also.

Assam Urban Water Supply and Sewerage Board (AUWSSB) - a state Public Sector Enterprise was set up in 1989 under the provisions of the Assam Urban Water Supply and Sewerage Board Act, 1985, to provide safe water and scientific sewerage system in all the urban areas of Assam. The structure of the AUWSSB based on the Act are: (i) Chairman, who shall be the Minister-in-charge of the department, (ii) Vice-Chairman with the status of a Director to be appointed by the state government, (iii) a Managing Director, (iv) Secretary to the government of Assam, Municipal Administration Department (ex-officio), (v) Secretary, to the government of Assam, Finance Department (ex-officio), (vi) Director, Municipal Administration Department (ex-officio), (vii) Town Planner, government of Assam (ex-officio), (viii) Chief Public Health Engineer (ex-officio), (ix) Chief Engineer, PWD (Roads, ex-officio), (x) Commissioner, GMC (ex-officio), (xi) Three elected Mayor/Chairman of the Urban Local Authorities to be appointed by the state government and (xii) Three other persons to be nominated by the

state government. AUWSSB have undertaken the scheme of supplying potable water in parts of the Guwahati city. In 1989-90 the Board started a project with the initial capacity of supplying 36 million litres of water per day. Now the Board serves 80,000 people in 7,500 households. It caters to 300 roads in Rajgarh, Hengerabari and Zoo-Narengi Road (Field Survey: 2014).

Besides these organizations, some private agencies have been developed in the city since 1991. They supply water at the door steps of the urban dwellers with their own distribution systems. This is a new trend of taking basic municipal service in the spirit of privatization.

2.12. Private Suppliers in Guwahati City

For the last few years, private mobile water tankers have become a common sight in the city area operating mostly without any legal framework. As the agencies are not registered, it is often closed down by the city administration, thereby bringing a halt to the water supply. However, due to public demand it usually reopens within a short period of time. There are about 20 private water supply agencies currently operating in the city to serve the requirements of the people and fulfilling the demand- supply gap. These agencies have become the daily need and only alternative of a certain section of people especially during the dry seasons from December to March, when the scarcity of water increases. Ironically, none of these agencies has yet been legally approved by the GMC for drinking water extraction and distribution. Among the many, two particularly agencies have come to play an important role in the water business serving the needs of a significant section of city dwellers. The rest operate in some pockets in their respective localities.

1. Brahmajal

Brahmajal is one of the oldest water supplying agencies established in the year 2003 at the bank of Brahmaputra river near Guwahati Planetarium. It was initiated at the cost of Rs. 8 lakhs. It is the only private agency drawing water from the river Brahmaputra. Its supply capacity is 15 lakh litres per day. The agency serves around 10 percent of the

population during dry the season and 7 per cent during the rainy season, especially in the central Guwahati area where demand is highest. It has about 1200 small water tankers for supply purposes. The distribution work and its management are done by the private entrepreneurs. The agency has a total manpower of 16 who are involved in the operation and maintenance work. The water is treated by conventional method of sedimentation and the quality of water is good. Monitoring of the machines, washing of the parts and their repair work are done on a yearly basis. The agency is fairly successful in serving the drinking water needs of people of the central part of the city.

2. Anuradha water supply agency

This is another important agency situated in Bamunimaidam area of the city. It was established in the year 2009 at the cost of Rs. 300,000. The source of water for this agency is deep tube well. They operate around 200 to 250 water tankers during the dry peak demand season and 100 to 150 tankers on a daily basis during the monsoon period covering Dispur to Gandhibasti area. An average of around 7 per cent population of the locality is served per day. In the operation and maintenance of the agency, only 4 persons are involved. Water is sent to PHED once in a year to test the quality. Cleaning and inspection work of the machines is done every 2 months. The agency is the only source of water for most of the people of that locality.

Thus, dependence on more than one source of water can be attributed to the unreliability of the piped water supply and reduction of groundwater level in the dry season. Such conditions have made the people opt for the only alternative source of drinking water available, which are the private suppliers.

At present the scenario has changed. Recently Guwahati Metropolitan Development Authority (GMDA) has claimed that every household in Guwahati will have round-the clock safe and clean water supply by 2016, once the four water supply projects; South West Zone, North Zone, South Central Zone and South East Zone; being under- taken by it are completed. These projects are funded by multiple agencies- South West Zone project (107 MLD per day) by JnNURM, the North (37 MLD per day) and South Central

Zone projects (191MLD per day) by Japan International Co operation Agency (JICA) and the South East Zone project (88 MLD per day) by Asian Development Bank (ADB).³⁰

2.13. Institutional Arrangement for Sanitation in Guwahati City

Sanitation has a close link with the environment, water supply, health and hygiene. The importance of drainage was been recognized by the Government of India through the National Master Plan of India (1983), which suggests standards for physical levels of sanitation services according to population of urban and rural centres. For sanitation, it is envisaged to achieve 100% population coverage for Class I urban areas (population 1 lac and above), 80% population coverage in other urban centres with provision for sewerage, sewage treatment facilities and low- cost sanitation methods. The Guwahati Municipal Corporation (GMC) is the sole authority for sanitation as well as collection and disposal of the garbage in the city. The city of Guwahati does not have any integrated sewerage system at present except for certain residential areas such as the Railway Colonies, the I.O.C. Refinery colonies and residential areas under defence establishments. All the mentioned areas have their own separate sewerage facilities. For the rest of the residents of the city, most individual houses have septic tanks without any collective disposal system for effluents.

The Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) disposal system of the city is becoming complex with every passing day. Around 10 lakh people of Guwahati (Census, 2011) generates around 500 metric tonnes or more solid waste in a day. In November 2008, the management of all the MSW of the city was handed over to the Hyderabad-based private company Ramky Enviro Engineering. This company has undertaken Integrated Solid Waste Management in the city under the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewable Mission (JnNURM). As per its agreement with the GMC, the company is to collect MSW from the households as well as roadside dustbins and dispose and process it in an environment-friendly manner. But the company has failed to keep these mandates. So, the GMC has withdrawn its agreement with Ramky Enviro Engineering on June, 2014.

³⁰ The Sentinel, September 24, 2012, “Guwahatians to get 24x7 water supply by 2016”

Now, the GMC has put in place a new Solid Waste Collection and Transportation system in association with different NGOs from July, 2014. GMC has entrusted 31 NGOs for 31 wards (one NGO for each ward) which is executing door-to-door collection of household solid waste, sweeping of arterial roads, streets, footpath and pavements, and collection of solid waste from bulk generators- for a nominal monthly charge per household and commercial establishment.

2.14. Recent Urban Development Programmes and Projects in Guwahati City

The Government of India has launched two big urban renewal missions recently, viz., Swachha Bharat Mission and the Smart City Project. Here, an attempt has been made to highlight these two mega programmes in the context of Guwahati city in the following sections.

A) Swachha Bharat Mission

On 2 October 2014, a good 67 years after Independence, India launched a five-year long country-wide cleanliness drive. The 'Mission Swachh Bharat' aims at making India clean by 20 October 2019 as a fitting tribute to Gandhi-the father of the nation. Elsewhere in the world, there is practically no parallel of a national government launching a mission on cleanliness-a municipal subject- with such visibility. This is a sub-Mission of the Ministry of Urban Development with a view to achieve the objective of providing sanitation facilities to all the 4041 statutory towns in the country over a period of five years. The specific objectives of the scheme are to eliminate open defecation; conversion of insanitary toilets to pour flush toilets, eradication of manual scavenging etc.³¹ To achieve these objectives, ambitious targets for construction of 1.04 crore individual household toilets, 5.08 lakh community and Public Toilets, and scientific solid waste management in all 4041 towns for 30.6 crore persons has been set. In the last 6 months, over 2.7 lakh individual household toilets, and over 1000 units of community and public toilets have been constructed and door to door collection of solid waste management has

³¹ Ministry of Urban Development, *Annual Report 2014-2015* <http://moud.gov.in>, p.7, (accessed on 25/12/2015).

been achieved in 329 towns. An amount of Rs. 860.00 crores has been released to 28 states for the implementation of the scheme.³²

Guwahati the capital city of Assam, has been ranked no. 10 among city capitals with an overall rank of 51 in the recently published Swachh Bharat rankings of 476 cities of the country based on the extent of open defecation and solid waste management practices.

.All the 476 class-I cities in 31 States and Union Territories, each with a population of above one lakh were surveyed for assessing total sanitation practices covering a set of parameters including the extent of open defecation, solid waste management, sewage management, waste water treatment, drinking water quality, surface water quality of water bodies and mortality due to water borne diseases etc.

The survey conducted during 2014-15 was commissioned by the Ministry of Urban Development as required under the National Sanitation Policy of 2008. Overall sanitation rankings of these cities based on a total of 100 marks assigned to different parameters covering all aspects would be announced later. The Swachh Bharat rankings are based on a total of 42 marks including 20 for open defecation indicators and 22 for solid waste management indicators. The Commissioner GMC, which looks after the cleanliness and waste management of the city, said that the result was satisfactory and the corporation will look to perform better. He also added that in a years' time, the city would fare much better as there will be several crucial developments in this regard in the next few months.³³

Launching of 'Mission Swachh Bharat'-a time bound programme for making India clean by 20 October 2019 by the federal government has been hailed by many as much needed intervention, even though city cleanliness is a municipal subject. However, for any cleanliness mission to succeed, its strategy needs to have three important elements: first, there is a need to constantly engage the citizens. Second, it must have a strategy to reduce waste. Third, and quite importantly, success would critically depend on the improvement

³² Ministry of Urban Development, Govt. of India, *10 Months Progress.....* (moud.gov.in),p.1 (accessed on 25/12/2015).

³³ GMC, e-newsletter, Issue# 3, September, 2015 , www.gmcportal.in (accessed on 20/12/2015).

of processing of the waste. Though the programme has been successfully launched as a mass movement with great deal of visibility, much is required to be done towards reducing and processing of waste. Unless this is done, our cities and towns may continue to inflict incalculable damages to their surroundings.³⁴

B) Smart City Concept

There is no universally accepted definition of a smart city. It means different things to different people. The conceptualization of Smart City, therefore, varies from city to city and country to country, depending on the level of development, willingness to change and reform, resources and aspirations of the residents. Even in India, there is no one way of defining a smart city. But some definitional boundaries are required to guide cities in the mission. In the imagination of any city dweller in India, the picture of a smart city contains a wish list of infrastructure and services that describes his or her aspirations. To provide for the aspirations and needs of the citizens, urban planners ideally aim at developing the entire urban eco-system, which is represented by the four pillars of comprehensive development-institutional, physical, social and economic infrastructure. This can be a long term goal and cities can work towards developing such comprehensive infrastructure incrementally, adding on layers of ‘smartness’

In the approach of the Smart Cities Mission, the objective is to promote cities that provide core infrastructure and give a decent quality of life to its citizens, a clean and sustainable environment and application of ‘smart’ solutions. The focus is on sustainable and inclusive development. The Smart Cities Mission of the Government of India is a bold, new initiative.

The core infrastructure elements in a smart city would conclude:

- i. adequate water supply,
- ii. assured electricity supply,
- iii. sanitation, including solid waste management,
- iv. efficient urban mobility and public transport,

³⁴ Rakesh Ranjan, *Mission Swachh Bharat: Stage is Set for getting into Basics* in Environment and Urbanization ASIA 5(2), pp.269-284, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 2014.

- v. affordable housing, especially for the poor,
- vi. robust IT connectivity and digitalization,
- vii. good governance, especially e-Governance and citizen participation,
- viii. sustainable environment,
- ix. safety and security of citizens, particularly women, children and the elderly, and
- x. health and education

As far as Smart Solution is concerned, an illustrative list is given below.³⁵ This is not, however, an exhaustive list, and cities are free to add more applications.

Smart Solutions

E-Governance and Citizen Services

1. Public Information, Grievance Redressal
2. Electronic Service Delivery
3. Citizen Engagement
4. Citizens-City's Eyes and Ears
5. Video Crime Monitoring

Waste Management

6. Waste to Energy & fuel
7. Waste to Compost
8. Waste Water to be treated
9. Recycling and Reduction of C&D Waste

Water Management

10. Smart Meters & Management
11. Leakage Identification, Preventive Maint
12. Water Quality Monitoring

Energy Management

13. Smart Meters & Management
14. Renewable Sources of Energy
15. Energy Efficient & Green buildings

³⁵ Ministry of Urban Development Government of India, Smart Solution an illustrative list. www.cmsmoud.nic.in (accessed on 25/12/2015).

Urban Mobility

16. Smart parking
17. Intelligent Traffic Management
18. Integrated Multi-Modal Transport
19. Tele-Medicine & Tele Education
20. Incubation/Trade-Facilitation Centers
21. Skill Development Centers.

Application of Smart Solutions will enable cities to use technology, information and data to improve infrastructure and services. Comprehensive development in this way will improve quality of life, create employment and enhance incomes for all, especially the poor and the disadvantaged, leading to inclusive Cities.

C) Guwahati City selected for Smart City Project

The Government of India on 27th August 2015 announced the names of 98 towns and cities chosen for its Smart Cities project after a nationwide “competition” between states. Guwahati has been selected among the 98 selected cities for the coveted project. Kohima, Imphal, Aizawl, Shillong and Agartala have also been chosen amongst other Northeastern cities in the mission.³⁶ The smart City mission is viewed as the government’s big push for urban renewal in almost 100 Indian cities and towns. The concept of smart city revolves around six major components: Smart Governance, Smart Economy, Smart Mobility, Smart living, Smart people and Smart Environment. Working on these components, evolution of Guwahati City as a smart city is a big challenge. It is very important to understand that the four pillars of a smart city i.e., institutional pillar, physical pillar, social pillar and economic pillar as highlighted by our central ministry have their roots as citizens. So the nodal centre will and should always be the citizens and their welfare for any smart city. Guwahati city cannot dream to be a smart city without working on the basic amenities of pure drinking water, electricity supply, better housing facilities, better mobility, better health care facilities which will be based on sustainable model. To make Guwahati a smart city, it requires active participation of stakeholders which include government, civil

³⁶ GMC, e-newsletter, Issue#3, September, 2015 ,www.gmcportal.in (accessed on 24/12/2015)

society organization and citizens. The collaborative working of all the stakeholders is the essential component to turn this ambitious plan into reality.

D) Nonconventional Energy in Water and Sanitation for Urban Poor Project in Guwahati

North east India's first solar-powered water treatment plant in Guwahati was launched on 29th July, 2015. The world Bank-funded Nonconventional Energy in Water and Sanitation for Urban Poor (NEWS-UP) project has been implemented by South Asian Forum for Environment (SAFE) in association with the GMC. An 8-KVA solar-powered water treatment plant with the capacity to provide 10,000 litres of water to 500-plus households has been set up by SAFE at Morasali slum pocket, Guwahati.³⁷ The plant has been equipped with facilities to provide 24X7 water supply to the households on an equitable basis. The 24X7 water supply will be provided through water ATMs (illustrated in picture I). Each household will have a special card for drawing water from the water ATMs. The water ATMs will have a slot where family members can insert the card for accessing water. Each family will be provided 10 litres of water for free. The community is involved in looking after the 24X7 water supply. The project will also provide state-of-the-art bio-sanitation units to the community. The entire NEWS-UP project has been launched with an aim to provide safe and environmentally-sustainable drinking water to the urban poor. The water quality of the treatment plant strictly adheres to WHO standards. The facility will also generate biogas and organic manure from the refuse of bio-toilets to showcase revenue- linked sustainable model for a climate- adaptive city.

³⁷ Ibid

Picture I: A view of Water ATMs in Morasali Slum Pocket



E) North East India's first e-Toilet at Guwahati

The GMC had on 17th May, 2015 installed two blocks of e-Toilets, one each for ladies and gents near the foot bridge of Maligaon Chariali starting a new chapter in the sanitation sector of the city.³⁸ It is the first time in the entire North east that e-Toilet has been considered as public utility. The initiative has provided a major thrust in maintaining good sanitary conditions at public places in Guwahati through the use of modern technology. The basic features of e-Toilets are- Coin insertion system, digital indicator about use of the toilet block, self maintenance facility (the e-toilet blocks are capable of self -cleaning and self- flushing after use), status check about number of users between any time periods over GPRS etc. The GMC has planned to install more blocks at different locations with major public movements in Guwahati (illustrated in picture II).

³⁸ GMC, e-newsletter, Issue # 1, July, 2015, www.gmcportal.in

Picture II: E-toilet in Maligaon Chariali, Guwahati



2.15. Observations and Conclusion

We have analysed various aspects of institutional arrangements for urban governance under the existing constitutional and legal provision for municipal government in India in general and Guwahati city in particular. It is observed that constitutional amendment and enactment of municipal laws without decentralization of political powers to municipal government by state governments have not secured institutions of local self government in urban areas. Local self-government should be based on the principle, which recognizes the rights of local communities to self-government. While the effectiveness of urban governance in delivery of public services depends on financial resources, skills and motives of political leaders and officers, institutional arrangements and the organizational structure greatly affect the performance of municipal government. But due to low level of decentralization of decision-making process and devolution of fiscal and financial powers, municipal governments in Assam are not equipped to handle their assigned duties.

The institution of ward committees under the CAA provision aims to bring municipal government closer to the people, achieve people's participation in planning and delivery of services and to ensure accountability of elected representatives to their electoral constituents. In order to achieve people's participation, accountability and transparency in the municipality, the ward committees should be made mandatory and broad-based to include civil society organizations, NGOs, residents associations and other stakeholders within a legal framework. . It is also observed that in Guwahati city there are 31 ward committees, but they have not been delegated with adequate powers and responsibilities to discharge their functions effectively. The wards have inadequate support from the GMC. Memberships of these ward committees is based on selection and nomination rather than election and is largely dominated by elected councilors. The distressing feature of ward committees is that they are packed with members of the ruling party, thus politicizing the grassroots institution, which is meant to promote peoples' participation in city governance. Though involvement of CBOs and NGOs and private sectors in some municipal affairs and service provision such as solid waste management, sewerage and sanitation, etc., is showing an increasing trend in the city, citizen participation in decision-making in the ward system is highly limited. Horizontal accountability mechanisms have not been in placed in municipal management in terms of budget formulation, expenditure and borrowing decisions and performance reporting. Thus, effective involvement of the citizen in plan preparation and implementation is missing. There are examples of community involvement in municipal budget formulation in a few cities like Bangalore and Hyderabad, but these examples are more of an exception than a general rule in India. Further, there is general resistance to pass on relevant information to the citizens by the municipal bureaucracy and sharing of information outside the municipal organizational hierarchy is perceived as a threat. There is no formal linkage in the wards and corporation for regular citizen participation and involvement of civil society organizations in the municipal affairs as in other countries of the world. Formal institutional mechanism for people's participation such as referendums, public hearings, citizens' assemblies, and people's initiatives are lacking in Assam seriously affecting service delivery.

It is observed that the effectiveness of service delivery and infrastructure development at the local level depends much on empowered local authorities. Funds for urban infrastructure and services can be effectively utilized if empowered local government, supported by appropriate institutional arrangements, takes full charge of urban affairs. Unless this change is brought about, urban governance situation in Assam is not likely to improve much even in the near future.